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ABSTRACT

This full-color publication uses a tabloid format to present highlights from the National Assessment of Educational Progress 2002 writing assessment. It describes assessment content; presents major findings as average scale scores and as percentages of students scoring at or above achievement levels for the nation, at grades 4, 8, and 12; shows results for participating states and other jurisdictions at grades 4 and 8; and discusses the performance of selected subgroups defined by gender and race/ethnicity. This publication also includes sample assessment writing tasks and student responses in narrative, informative, and persuasive writing modes. (RS)

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ED 476 157

NCES
National Center for Education Statistics

The Nation's Report Card

Writing Highlights 2002

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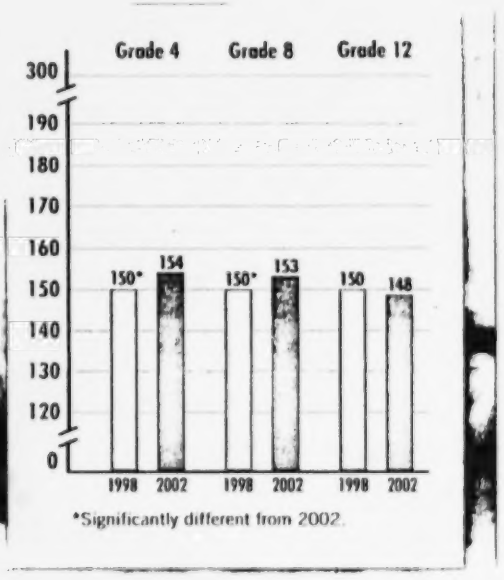
Fourth- and Eighth-Grade Students Make Gains in Writing Since 1998



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 and 2002 Writing Assessments.

Important Indicator of Educational Progress

Since 1969, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has been an ongoing nationally representative indicator of what American students know and can do in major academic subjects.

Over the years, NAEP has measured students' achievement in many subjects, including reading, mathematics, science, writing, U.S. history, geography, civics, and the arts. In 2002, NAEP conducted a national assessment in writing at grades 4, 8, and 12. State-level results are also reported at grades 4 and 8.

NAEP is a project of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) within the Institute of Education Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education and is overseen by the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB).

Students' average scores on the NAEP writing assessment increased between 1998 and 2002 at grades 4 and 8. However, there was no significant change detected in the average performance of twelfth-graders over the same period.

This writing assessment was first administered to nationally representative samples of fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-grade students in 1998. The figure above shows national average scores in 1998 and 2002 based on the 0–300 NAEP writing scale at each grade.

Average test scores have a standard error—a range of a few points plus or minus the score—due to sampling error and measurement error. Statistical tests are used to determine whether the differences between average scores are significant; therefore, not all apparent differences may be found to be statistically significant. All differences cited in this report were tested for statistical significance (see the technical appendix of *The Nation's Report Card: Writing 2002* for details).

U.S. Department of Education
Institute of Education Sciences

NCES 2003–531

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Achievement Levels Provide Standards for Student Performance

Achievement levels are performance standards set by NAGB that provide a context for interpreting student performance on NAEP. These performance standards, based on recommendations from broadly representative panels of educators and members of the public, are used to report what students should know and be able to do at the *Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced* levels of performance in each subject area and at each grade assessed.

As provided by law, NCES, upon review of a congressionally mandated evaluation of NAEP, has determined that achievement levels are to be used on a trial basis and should be interpreted and used with caution.

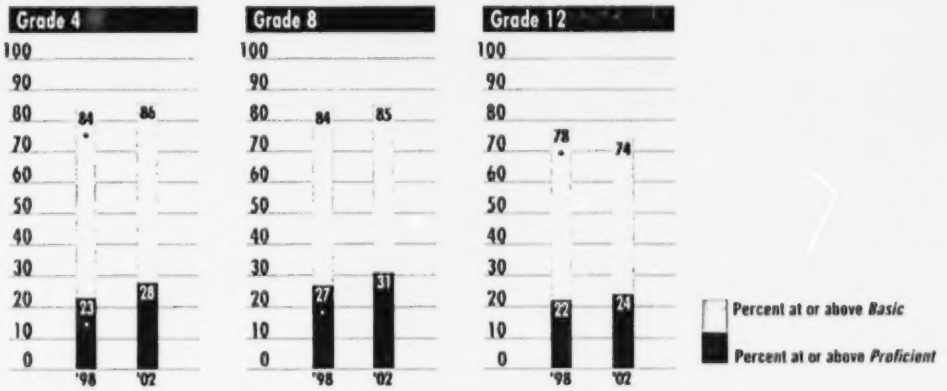
However, both NCES and NAGB believe that these performance standards are useful for understanding trends in student achievement. NAEP achievement levels have been widely used by national and state officials.

Detailed descriptions of the NAEP writing achievement levels can be found in chapter 1 of the NAEP 2002 writing report card and on the NAGB web site at http://www.nagb.org/pubs/writingbook.pdf

Gains Seen in Fourth- and Eighth-Graders' 2002 Achievement Level Performance

National achievement level results for grades 4, 8, and 12 are shown in the figure and table below. In 2002, 28 percent of fourth-graders, 31 percent of eighth-graders, and 24 percent of twelfth-graders performed at or above the *Proficient* level in writing. This represents an increase since 1998 in the percentage of fourth- and eighth-graders reaching the *Proficient* level as well as an increase in the percentage of fourth-graders performing at or above *Basic*. The percentage of twelfth-graders performing at or above *Basic* declined between 1998 and 2000.

Percentage of students at or above *Basic* and *Proficient* in writing, grades 4, 8, and 12: 1998 and 2002



Percentage of students, by writing achievement level, grades 4, 8, and 12: 1998 and 2002

		Below *Basic*	At *Basic*	At *Proficient*	At *Advanced*	At or above *Basic*	At or above *Proficient*
Grade 4	1998	16 *	61 *	22 *	1 *	84 *	23 *
	2002	14	58	26	2	86	28
Grade 8	1998	16	58 *	25 *	1 *	84	27 *
	2002	15	54	29	2	85	31
Grade 12	1998	22 *	57 *	21	1 *	78 *	22
	2002	26	51	22	2	74	24

* Significantly different from 2002.
NOTE: Percentages within each achievement level range may not add to 100, or to the exact percentages at or above achievement levels, due to rounding.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 and 2002 Writing Assessments.

Achievement Levels

Basic: This level denotes partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at each grade.

Proficient: This level represents solid academic performance for each grade assessed. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter.

Advanced: This level signifies superior performance.

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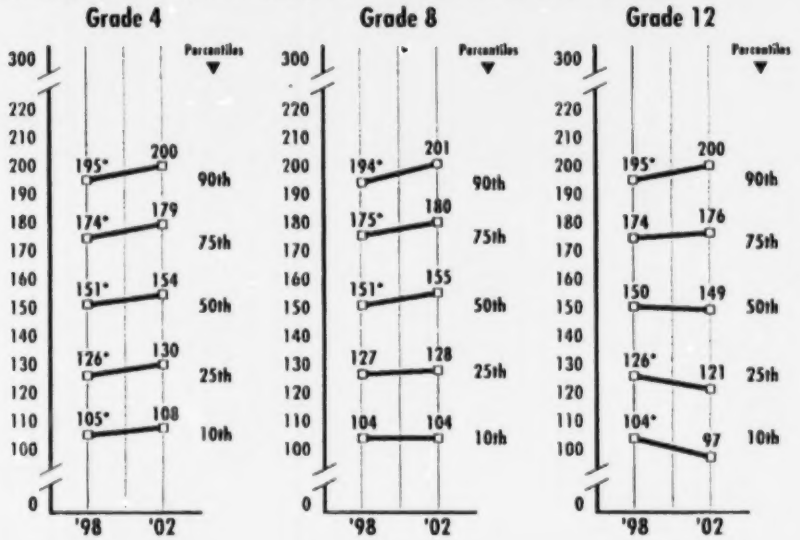
Gains Made by Higher-Performing Students at All Three Grades; Losses Found Among Lower-Performing Students at Grade 12

Increases in fourth-grade writing scores were observed for lower-, middle-, and higher-performing students. Gains were observed among the middle- and higher-performing eighth-graders at the 50th, 75th, and 90th percentiles. At grade 12, only scores at the 90th percentile increased since 1998, while scores of the lower-performing students at the 10th and 25th percentiles were lower in 2002.

Looking at changes in scores for students at upper and lower performance levels gives a more complete picture of student progress. An examination of scores at different percentiles on the 0–300 writing scale at each grade indicates whether the changes seen in the national average score results are reflected in the performance of lower-, middle-, and higher-performing students. The percentile indicates the percentage of students whose average scores fell below a particular score. For example, the 75th percentile score at grade 4 was 179 in 2002, indicating that 75 percent of fourth-graders scored below 179.

Writing scale score percentiles, grades 4, 8, and 12: 1998 and 2002



* Significantly different from 2002.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 and 2002 Writing Assessments.

NAEP Writing Assessment Design: Framework, Accommodations, and Samples

Each student who participated in the writing assessment received a booklet containing two 25-minute writing tasks.

The NAEP writing framework, which defines the content for the writing assessment, was developed through a comprehensive national process and adopted by NAGB. The writing framework is organized according to three primary purposes for writing—narrative, informative, and persuasive—and is designed around six objectives suggesting that students should

- write for a variety of purposes;
- write on a variety of tasks and for different audiences;
- write from a variety of stimulus materials, and within various time constraints;
- generate, draft, revise, and edit ideas and forms of expression in their writing;
- display effective choices in the organization of their writing, include detail to illustrate and elaborate their ideas, and use appropriate conventions of written English; and
- value writing as a communicative activity.

The complete framework is available on the NAGB web site at http://www.nagb.org/pubs/pubs.html.

Beginning in 1998, students with disabilities and limited English proficient students were allowed the use of accommodations (e.g., extra time, individual rather than group administration) in assessment procedures, if required, so that they could participate in NAEP. The writing results presented in this report are based on administration procedures that permitted accommodations.

Results from the 2002 writing assessment are reported for the nation at grades 4, 8, and 12, and for states at grades 4 and 8. The national results are based on a representative sample of students in both public and nonpublic schools, while the state results are based only on public-school students.

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Fourth- and Eighth-Grade Results for Participating States and Jurisdictions

In addition to national results on students' writing performance, the 2002 assessment collected performance data for fourth- and eighth-graders who attended public schools in states and other jurisdictions that volunteered to participate. In 2002, 45 states and 5 other jurisdictions participated at grade 4, and 44 states and 6 other jurisdictions participated at grade 8.

Two states at grade 4 and 3 states at grade 8 did not meet minimum school participation guidelines for reporting their results in 2002.

The following pages present information about students' average writing scores and achievement level performance in participating states and jurisdictions. In addition to the results from the 2002 assessment, results are also reported for 1998 at grade 8 (the state-level assessment was not administered at grade 4 in 1998).

Average Score Results

At grade 4, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Delaware were among the highest-performing jurisdictions. At grade 8, Connecticut, Department of Defense domestic schools and overseas schools, Massachusetts, and Vermont were among the highest performing jurisdictions.

Tables A and B present average writing score results for fourth- and eighth-graders, respectively. Average fourth-grade scores ranged from 125 to 174. Of the 36 jurisdictions that participated in both the 1998 and 2002 eighth-grade writing assessments, 16 showed score increases in 2002 and none showed a significant decrease.

Table A. Average writing scale scores, grade 4 public schools: By state, 2002

	2002		2002		2002		2002
Nation (Public)	153	Kansas ‡	149	New Mexico	142	Vermont	158
Alabama	140	Kentucky	154	New York ‡	163	Virginia	157
Arizona	140	Louisiana	142	North Carolina	159	Washington ‡	158
Arkansas	145	Maine	158	North Dakota ‡	150	West Virginia	147
California ‡	146	Maryland	157	Ohio	157	Wyoming	150
Connecticut	174	Massachusetts	170	Oklahoma	142	**Other Jurisdictions**	
Delaware	163	Michigan	147	Oregon	149	District of Columbia	135
Florida	158	Minnesota ‡	156	Pennsylvania	156	DDESS [1]	156
Georgia	149	Mississippi	141	Rhode Island	157	DoDDS [2]	159
Hawaii	149	Missouri	151	South Carolina	145	Guam	131
Idaho	150	Montana ‡	149	Tennessee ‡	149	Virgin Islands	125
Indiana	154	Nebraska	154	Texas	154		
Iowa ‡	155	Nevada	145	Utah	145		

Table B. Average writing scale scores, grade 8 public schools: By state, 1998 and 2002

	1998	2002		1998	2002		1998	2002		1998	2002
Nation (Public) [3]	148 *	152	Kentucky	146	149	North Carolina	150 *,**	157	West Virginia	144	144
Alabama	144	142	Louisiana	136 *,**	142	North Dakota ‡	—	147	Wisconsin ‡	153	—
Arizona	143	141	Maine	155	157	Ohio	—	160	Wyoming	146 *,**	151
Arkansas	137 *,**	142	Maryland	147 *,**	157	Oklahoma	152	150	**Other Jurisdictions**		
California ‡	141	144	Massachusetts	155 *,**	163	Oregon ‡	149 *	155	American Samoa	—	95
Colorado	151	—	Michigan	—	147	Pennsylvania	—	154	District of Columbia	126	128
Connecticut	165	164	Minnesota ‡	148	—	Rhode Island	148 *,**	151	DDESS [1]	160	164
Delaware	144 *,**	159	Mississippi	134 *,**	141	South Carolina	140 *,**	146	DoDDS [2]	156 *,**	161
Florida	142 *,**	154	Missouri	142 *,**	151	Tennessee ‡	148	148	Guam	—	130
Georgia	146	147	Montana ‡	150	152	Texas	154	152	Virgin Islands	124	128
Hawaii	135	138	Nebraska	—	156	Utah	143	143			
Idaho	—	151	Nevada	140	137	Vermont	—	163			
Indiana	—	150	New Mexico	141	140	Virginia	153	157			
Kansas ‡	—	155	New York ‡	146 *,**	151	Washington ‡	148 *,**	155			

— Indicates that the jurisdiction did not participate or did not meet minimum participation guidelines for reporting.

‡ Indicates that the jurisdiction did not meet one or more of the guidelines for school participation in 2002.

* Significantly different from 2002 when only one jurisdiction or the nation is being examined.

** Significantly different from 2002 when using a multiple-comparison procedure based on all jurisdictions that participated both years.

[1] Department of Defense Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools.

[2] Department of Defense Dependents Schools (Overseas).

[3] National results for the 1998 assessment are based on the national sample, not on aggregated state assessment samples.

NOTE: Comparative performance results may be affected by changes in exclusion rates for students with disabilities and limited English proficient students in the NAEP samples.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 and 2002 Writing Assessments.

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Figures A and B show how the performance of students in participating states and jurisdictions compares to the performance of students in the national public-school sample. Of the 48 states and other jurisdictions that participated in the 2002 assessment at grade 4, 17 had scores that were higher than the national average score, 9 had scores that were not found to differ significantly from the national average, and 22 had scores that were lower than the national average.

Of the 47 states and other jurisdictions that participated in the 2002 assessment at grade 8, 12 had scores that were higher than the national average score, 15 had scores that were not found to differ significantly from the national average, and 20 had scores that were lower than the national average.

Figure A. Comparison of state and national public school average writing scores, grade 4: 2002

Figure B. Comparison of state and national public school average writing scores, grade 8: 2002

Jurisdiction had higher average scale score than nation.
Jurisdiction was not found to be significantly different from nation in average scale score.
Jurisdiction had lower average scale score than nation.
Jurisdiction did not meet minimum participation rate guidelines.
Jurisdiction did not participate in the NAEP 2002 Writing State Assessment.

[1] Department of Defense Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools.

[2] Department of Defense Dependents Schools (Overseas).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

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Achievement Level Results

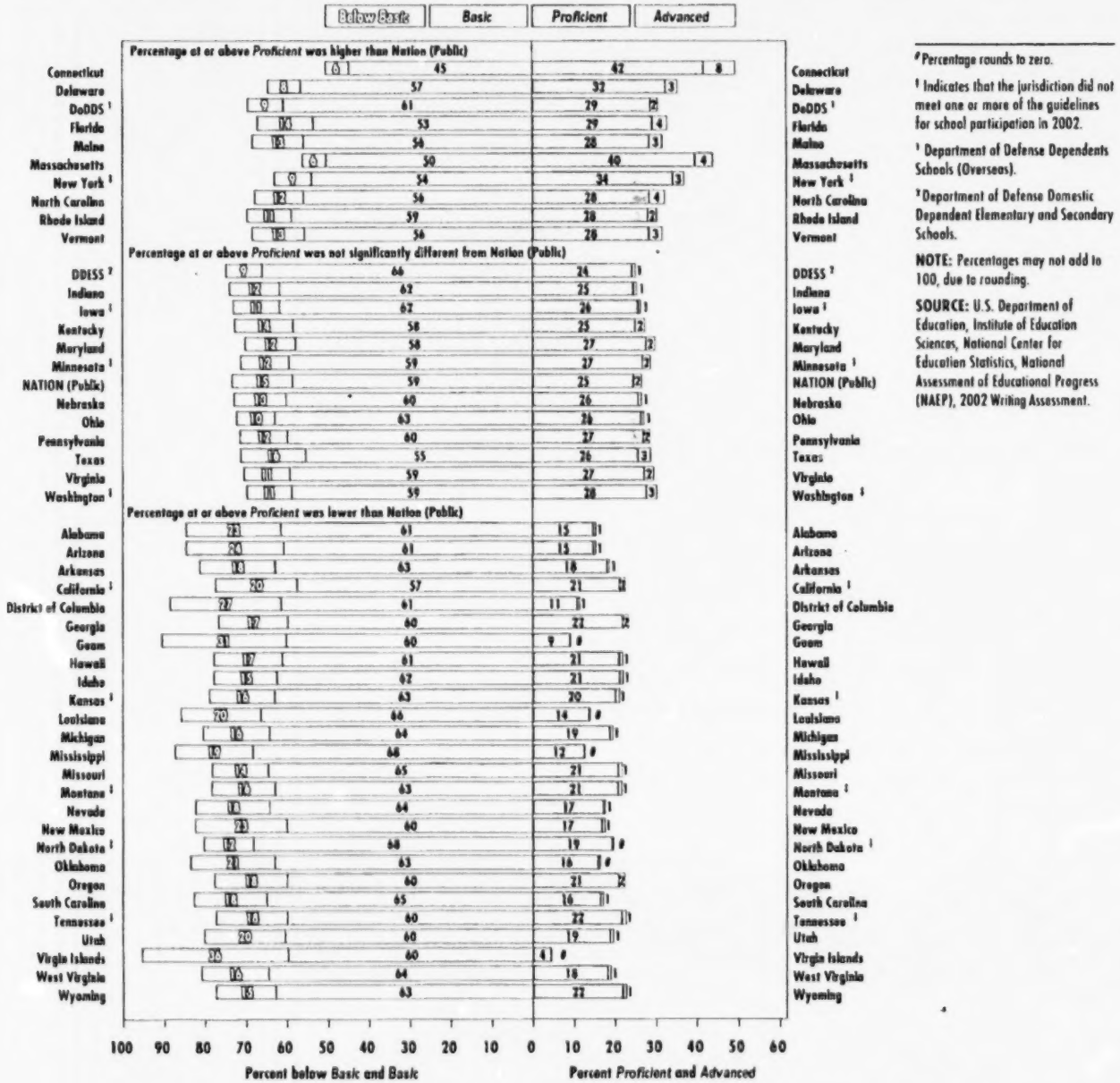
The following figures show the percentages of fourth- and eighth-graders at each achievement level for the states and jurisdictions that participated in the 2002 writing assessment. Figure C shows this information for grade 4, while figure D shows this information for grade 8.

At grade 4, as shown in figure C, 9 states and 1 other jurisdiction had higher percentages of students at or above *Proficient* than the nation, 12 had percentages that were not found to differ significantly from the nation, and 26 had percentages that were lower than the nation.

At grade 8, as shown in figure D, 8 states and 2 other jurisdictions had higher percentages of students at or above *Proficient* than the nation,15 had percentages that were not found to differ significantly from the nation, and 22 had percentages that were lower than the nation.

In both figures, the shaded bars represent the proportion of students in each of three achievement levels—*Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced*—as

Figure C. Percentage of students within each writing achievement level, grade 4 public schools: By state, 2002


Below Basic
Basic
Proficient
Advanced
Percentage at or above Proficient was higher than Nation (Public)
Connecticut 45 42 8
Delaware 37 32 3
DoDDS ! 31 29 2
Florida 33 29 4
Maine 31 28 3
Massachusetts 30 40 4
New York ! 31 34 3
North Carolina 32 28 4
Rhode Island 31 28 2
Vermont 33 28 3
Percentage at or above Proficient was not significantly different from Nation (Public)
DDESS ? 31 66 24 1
Indiana 32 62 25 1
Iowa ! 31 62 26 1
Kentucky 34 58 25 2
Maryland 32 58 27 2
Minnesota ! 32 59 27 2
NATION (Public) 35 59 25 2
Nebraska 33 60 26 1
Ohio 31 63 26 1
Pennsylvania 32 60 27 2
Texas 35 55 26 3
Virginia 31 59 27 2
Washington ! 31 59 28 3
Percentage at or above Proficient was lower than Nation (Public)
Alabama 39 61 15 1
Arizona 39 61 15 1
Arkansas 33 63 16 1
California ! 30 57 21 2
District of Columbia 37 61 11 1
Georgia 37 60 22 2
Guam 41 60 9 #
Hawaii 37 61 21 1
Idaho 35 62 21 1
Kansas ! 35 63 20 1
Louisiana 39 66 14 #
Michigan 36 64 19 1
Mississippi 39 68 12 #
Missouri 33 65 21 1
Montana ! 33 63 21 1
Nevada 33 64 17 1
New Mexico 39 60 17 1
North Dakota ! 32 68 19 #
Oklahoma 31 63 16 #
Oregon 33 60 21 2
South Carolina 33 65 16 1
Tennessee ! 36 60 22 1
Utah 30 60 19 1
Virgin Islands 39 60 4 #
West Virginia 36 64 18 1
Wyoming 35 63 22 1
100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0 10 20 30 40 50 60
Percent below Basic and Basic
Percent Proficient and Advanced

Percentage rounds to zero.

! Indicates that the jurisdiction did not meet one or more of the guidelines for school participation in 2002.

? Department of Defense Dependents Schools (Overseas).

? Department of Defense Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools.

NOTE: Percentages may not add to 100, due to rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

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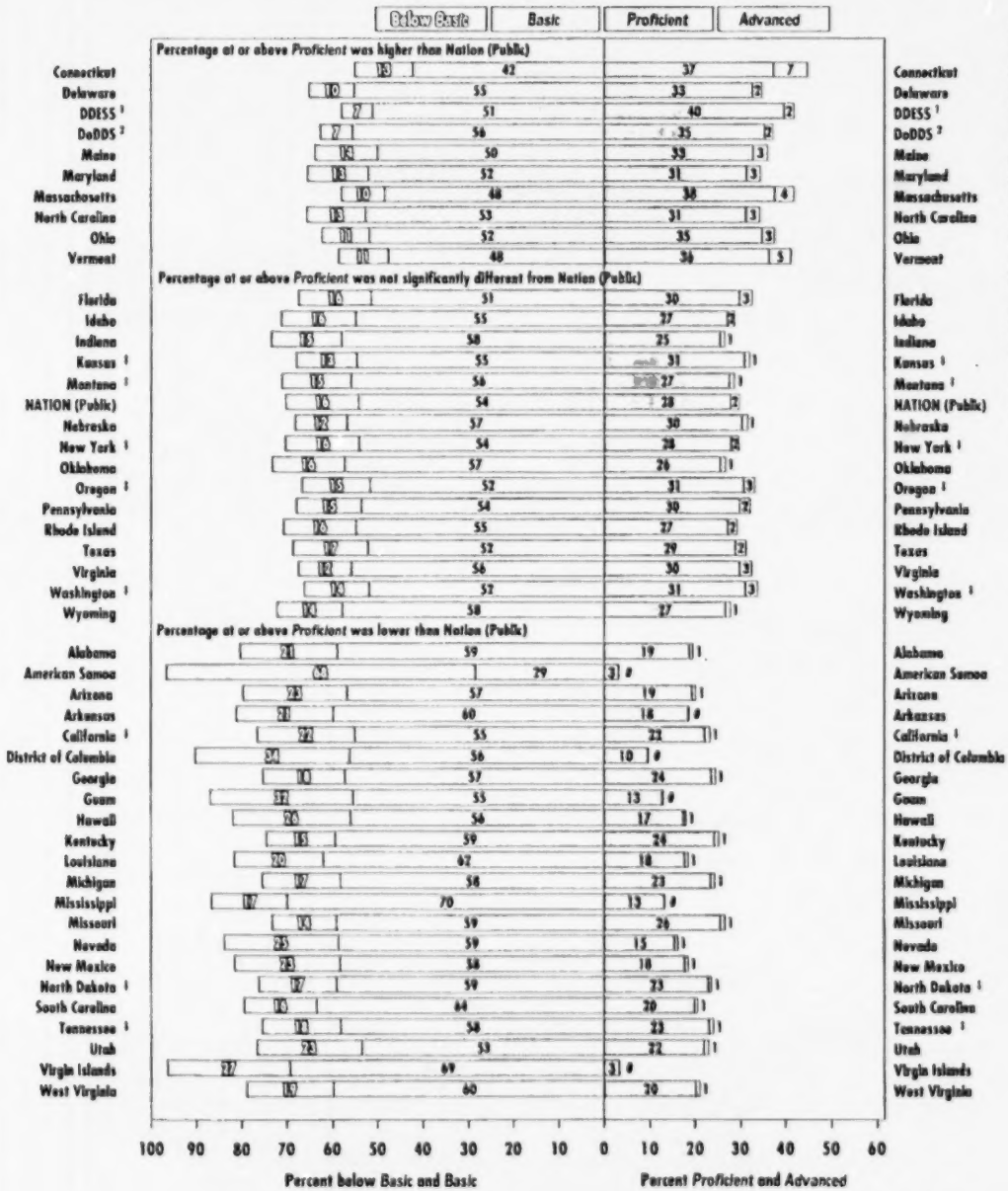
well as the proportion performing below *Basic*. The central vertical line divides the proportion of students who fell below the *Proficient* level (i.e., at *Basic* or below *Basic*) from those who performed at or above the *Proficient* achievement level (i.e., at *Proficient* or at *Advanced*). Scanning down the horizontal bars to the right of the vertical line allows comparison of states' and other jurisdictions' percentages of students at or above *Proficient*—the achievement level identified by NAGB as the standard all students should reach.

Jurisdictions are listed alphabetically within three clusters: the top cluster had higher percentages of students at or above *Proficient* than the nation, the middle cluster had percentages that were not found to differ significantly from the nation, and the bottom cluster had lower percentages of students at or above *Proficient* than the nation.

Figure D. Percentage of students within each writing achievement level, grade 8 public schools: By state, 2002


Below Basic
Basic
Proficient
Advanced
Percentage at or above Proficient was higher than Nation (Public)
Connecticut 3 42 37 7
Delaware 10 55 33 2
DDESS ! 7 51 40 2
DoDDS ! 7 56 35 2
Maine 4 50 39 3
Maryland 13 52 31 3
Massachusetts 10 48 38 4
North Carolina 13 53 31 3
Ohio 11 52 35 3
Vermont 11 48 36 5
Percentage at or above Proficient was not significantly different from Nation (Public)
Florida 13 51 30 3
Idaho 10 55 27 2
Indiana 15 58 25 1
Kansas ! 13 55 31 1
Montana ! 15 56 27 1
NATION (Public) 15 54 28 2
Nebraska 12 57 30 1
New York ! 10 54 28 2
Oklahoma 13 57 26 1
Oregon ! 15 52 31 3
Pennsylvania 15 54 30 2
Rhode Island 10 55 27 2
Texas 12 52 29 2
Virginia 12 56 30 3
Washington ! 13 52 31 3
Wyoming 11 58 27 1
Percentage at or above Proficient was lower than Nation (Public)
Alabama 21 59 19 1
American Samoa 29 68 3 #
Arizona 23 57 19 1
Arkansas 21 60 18 #
California ! 22 55 22 1
District of Columbia 32 56 10 #
Georgia 20 57 24 1
Guam 33 55 13 #
Hawaii 20 56 17 1
Kentucky 15 59 24 1
Louisiana 20 62 18 1
Michigan 17 58 23 1
Mississippi 17 70 12 #
Missouri 11 59 26 1
Nevada 25 59 15 1
New Mexico 23 58 18 1
North Dakota ! 17 59 23 1
South Carolina 13 64 20 1
Tennessee ! 13 58 23 1
Utah 23 53 22 1
Virgin Islands 27 69 3 #
West Virginia 12 60 28 1
100 90 80 70 60 50 40 30 20 10 0 10 20 30 40 50 60
Percent below Basic and Basic
Percent Proficient and Advanced

Percentage rounds to zero.

! Indicates that the jurisdiction did not meet one or more of the guidelines for school participation in 2002.

1 Department of Defense Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools.

2 Department of Defense Dependents Schools (Overseas).

NOTE: Percentages may not add to 100, due to rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

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Students Performing At or Above *Proficient* in Writing

The percentages of students in participating states or other jurisdictions performing at or above the *Proficient* level are presented in table C for grade 4 and in table D for grade 8. The percentage of fourth-graders at or above *Proficient* ranged from 4 to 49 percent. The percentage of eighth-graders at or above *Proficient* increased since 1998 in 17 of the 36 jurisdictions that participated in both years and decreased in 1 jurisdiction.

Table C. Percentage of students at or above *Proficient* in writing, grade 4 public schools: By state, 2002

	2002		2002		2002		2002
Nation (Public)	27	Kansas !	21	New Mexico	18	Vermont	32
Alabama	15	Kentucky	27	New York !	37	Virginia	29
Arizona	15	Louisiana	14	North Carolina	32	Washington !	30
Arkansas	19	Maine	32	North Dakota !	20	West Virginia	19
California !	23	Maryland	30	Ohio	28	Wyoming	23
Connecticut	49	Massachusetts	44	Oklahoma	16	**Other Jurisdictions**	
Delaware	35	Michigan	19	Oregon	22	District of Columbia	11
Florida	33	Minnesota !	29	Pennsylvania	29	DDESS [1]	25
Georgia	23	Mississippi	13	Rhode Island	30	DoDDS [2]	30
Hawaii	22	Missouri	22	South Carolina	17	Guam	9
Idaho	22	Montana !	22	Tennessee !	23	Virgin Islands	4
Indiana	26	Nebraska	27	Texas	29		
Iowa !	27	Nevada	18	Utah	20		

Table D. Percentage of students at or above *Proficient* in writing, grade 8 public schools: By state, 1998 and 2002

	1998	2002		1998	2002		1998	2002		1998	2002
Nation (Public) [3]	24 *	30	Louisiana	12 *,**	18	Ohio	—	38	**Other Jurisdictions**		
Alabama	17	20	Maine	32	36	Oklahoma	25	27	American Samoa	—	3
Arizona	21	20	Maryland	23 *,**	35	Oregon !	27 *,**	33	District of Columbia	11	10
Arkansas	13 *,**	19	Massachusetts	31 *,**	42	Pennsylvania	—	32	DDESS [1]	38	42
California !	20	23	Michigan	—	24	Rhode Island	25 *,**	29	DoDDS [2]	31 *,**	37
Colorado	27	—	Minnesota !	25	—	South Carolina	15 *,**	20	Guam	—	13
Connecticut	44	45	Mississippi	11	13	Tennessee !	24	24	Virgin Islands	9 *	3
Delaware	22 *,**	35	Missouri	17 *,**	27	Texas	31	31			
Florida	19 *,**	32	Montana !	25	29	Utah	21	23			
Georgia	23	25	Nebraska	—	32	Vermont	—	41			
Hawaii	15 *	18	Nevada	17	16	Virginia	27 *	32			
Idaho	—	29	New Mexico	18	18	Washington !	25 *,**	34			
Indiana	—	26	New York !	21 *,**	30	West Virginia	18	21			
Kansas !	—	32	North Carolina	27 *,**	34	Wisconsin !	28	—			
Kentucky	21	25	North Dakota !	—	24	Wyoming	23 *	28			

— Indicates that the jurisdiction did not participate or did not meet minimum participation guidelines for reporting.
! Indicates that the jurisdiction did not meet one or more of the guidelines for school participation in 2002.
* Significantly different from 2002 when only one jurisdiction or the nation is being examined.
** Significantly different from 2002 when using a multiple-comparison procedure based on all jurisdictions that participated both years.
[1] Department of Defense Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools.
[2] Department of Defense Dependents Schools (Overseas).
[3] National results for the 1998 assessment are based on the national sample, not on aggregated state assessment samples.
NOTE: Comparative performance results may be affected by changes in exclusion rates for students with disabilities and limited English proficient students in the NAEP samples.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 and 2002 Writing Assessments.

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Subgroup Results Reveal How Various Groups of Students Performed on NAEP

In addition to reporting on the performance of all students, NAEP provides results for a variety of subgroups of students (e.g., race/ethnicity subgroups) for each grade level assessed. The subgroup results show not only how these groups of students performed in comparison with one another, but also what progress each group has made over time. This information is a valuable indicator of how well the nation is progressing toward the goal of improving the achievement of all students.

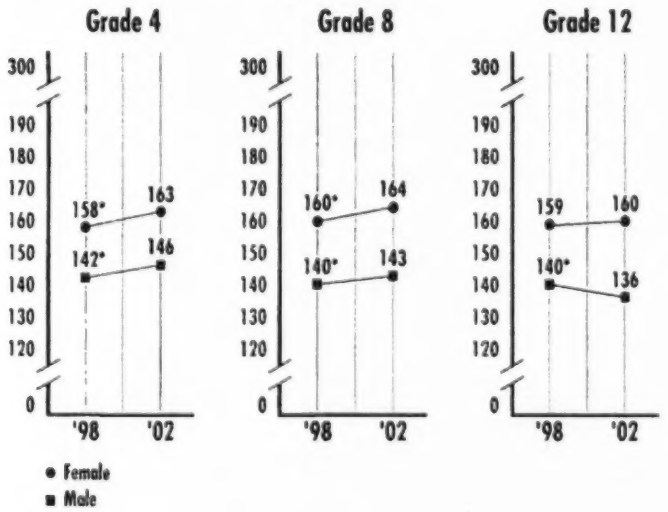
When reading these subgroup results, it is important to keep in mind that there is no simple cause-and-effect relationship between membership in a subgroup and achievement on NAEP. A complex mixture of educational and socioeconomic factors may interact to affect student performance.

Average Writing Scores by Gender

The figures below present average writing scores for males and females across assessment years.

At grades 4 and 8, the average writing scores of both male and female students were higher in 2002 than in 1998. However, at grade 12 the average scores for male students declined since 1998, while the apparent increase in the average scores for female students during the same period was not found to be statistically significant. Female students outperformed male students at all three grades.

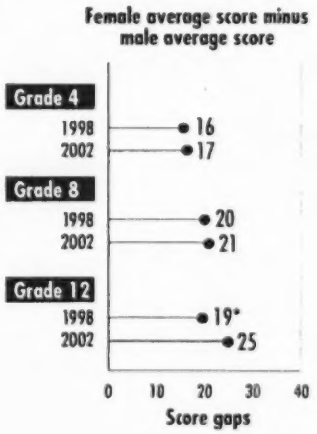
Average writing scale scores, by gender, grades 4, 8, and 12: 1998 and 2002



* Significantly different from 2002.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 and 2002 Writing Assessments.

Average Writing Score Gaps Between Female and Male Students

In 2002, females outperformed males on average by 17 points at grade 4, 21 points at grade 8, and 25 points at grade 12. Between 1998 and 2002, a significant increase in the average score gap between male and female students was noted at grade 12; however, no significant change was detected in the gap between males and females at grades 4 and 8.



* Significantly different from 2002.
NOTE: Score gaps are calculated based on differences between unrounded average scale scores.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 and 2002 Writing Assessments.

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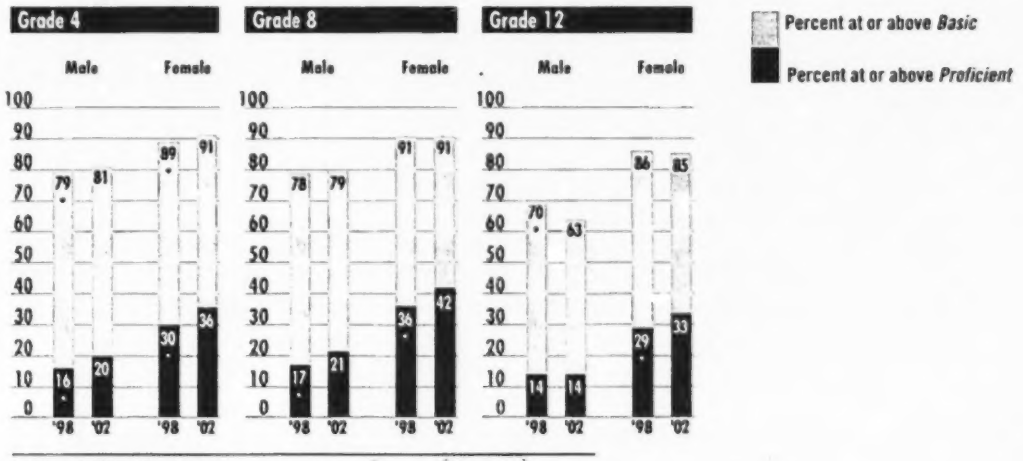
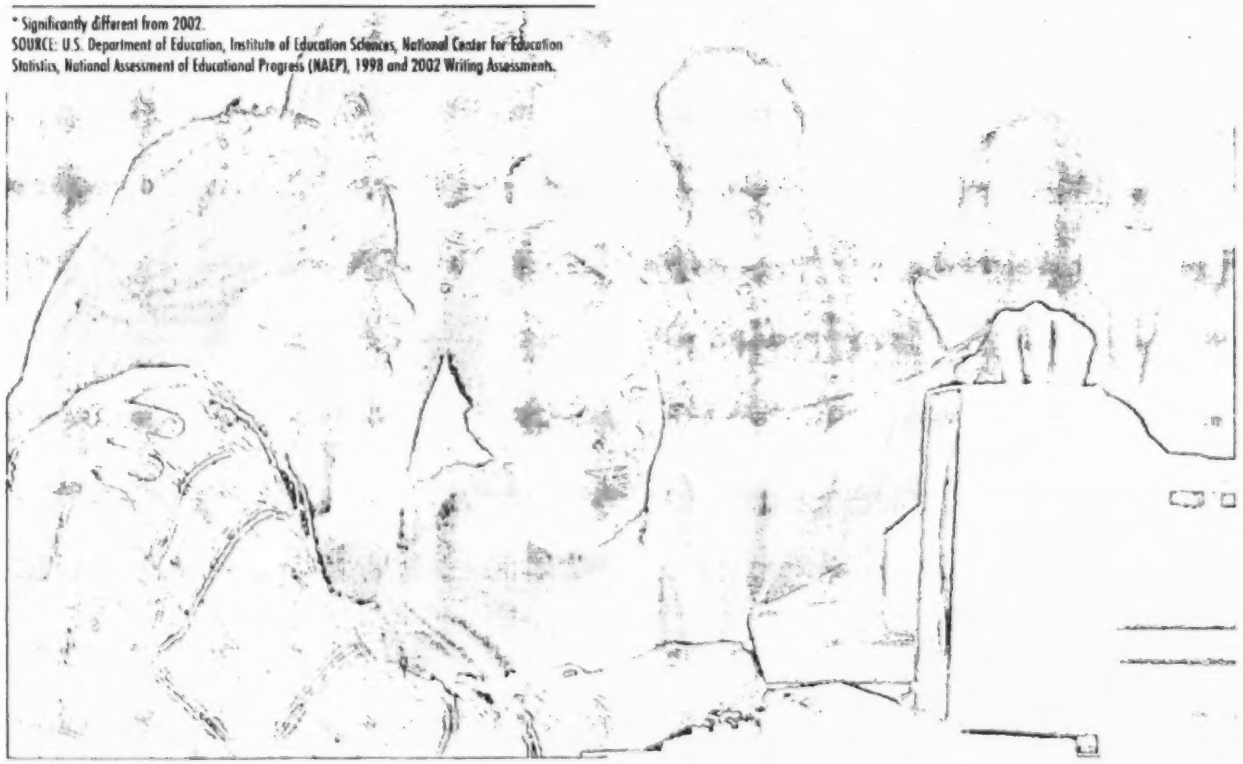
Achievement Level Results by Gender

The percentages of male and female students at or above the *Basic* and *Proficient* writing achievement levels are presented in the figure below. At grade 4, the percentages of male and female students at or above *Basic* and at or above *Proficient* were higher in 2002 than in 1998. At grade 8, although the percentages of both males and females at or above *Proficient* increased since 1998, no change was detected in the percentages of males or females performing at or above *Basic* between 1998 and 2002. At grade 12, the percentage of male students at or above *Basic* was lower in 2002 than in 1998. While the percentage of female twelfth-graders at or above *Proficient* increased since 1998, no change in the percentage of male students at or above *Proficient* was observed over the same period.

Percentage of students at or above *Basic* and *Proficient* in writing, by gender, grades 4, 8, and 12: 1998 and 2002



* Significantly different from 2002.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 and 2002 Writing Assessments.



Average Writing Scores by Race/Ethnicity

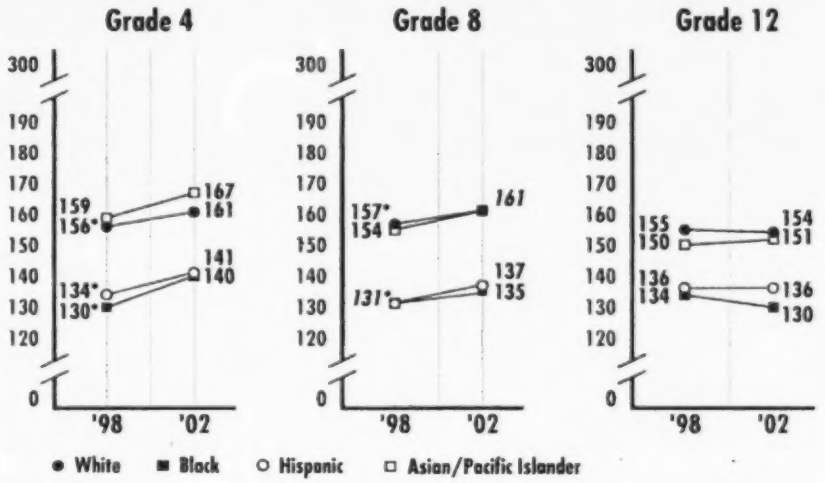
Students who took the NAEP writing assessment were identified from school records as belonging to one of the following racial ethnic groups: White, Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian (including Alaska Native), or Other. The figures on the right show the average writing scores for students in four of these subgroups at grades 4, 8, and 12, across assessment years (results for the approximately 1 percent or less of students classified as American Indian/Alaska Native or Other are included in the writing report card but not reported here).

At grades 4 and 8, White, Black, and Hispanic students had higher average writing scores in 2002 than in 1998. Apparent increases for fourth- and eighth-grade Asian/Pacific Islander students were not found to be statistically significant.

At grade 12, no significant changes were detected for any of the racial/ethnic groups from 1998 to 2002.

In 2002, Asian/Pacific Islander students outperformed all other groups at grade 4, and both Asian/Pacific Islander and White students outperformed Black and Hispanic students at grades 4 and 8. At grade 12, White and Asian/Pacific Islander students scored higher on average than Black and Hispanic students, and Hispanic students had higher scores than Black students.

Average writing scale scores, by race/ethnicity, grades 4, 8, and 12: 1998 and 2002



* Significantly different from 2002

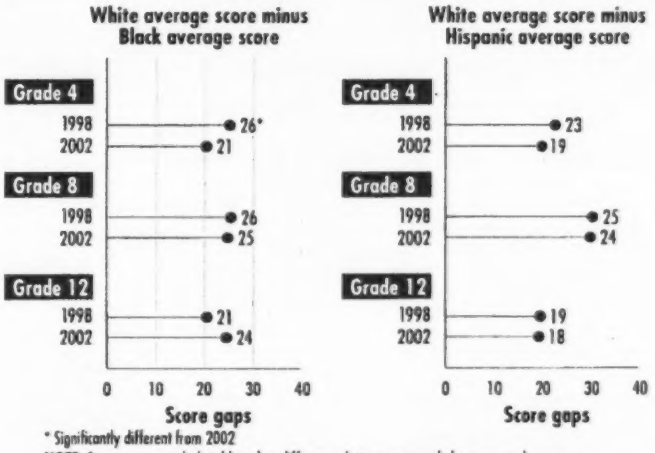
NOTE: Italicized scale score values indicate that two or more groups had the same rounded average score. The average scale scores, when rounded, were the same for Black and Hispanic students at grade 8 in 1998 (the 1998 scores were significantly different from 2002 for both Black and Hispanic students), and for White and Asian/Pacific Islander students at grade 8 in 2002. At each grade, approximately 1 percent or less of students were classified as American Indian/Alaska Native or Other.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 and 2002 Writing Assessments.

Average Writing Score Gaps Between Selected Racial/Ethnic Subgroups

Average score gaps across assessment years between White students and Black students and between White students and Hispanic students are presented in the figures shown to the right.

In 2002, the score gap between White fourth-graders and Black fourth-graders was smaller than in 1998. At grades 8 and 12, any apparent differences in either the White/Black or White/Hispanic gaps between 2002 and 1998 were not found to be statistically significant. Similarly, the apparent change between 1998 and 2002 in the White/Hispanic gap at grade 4 was not found to be statistically significant.



* Significantly different from 2002

NOTE: Score gaps are calculated based on differences between unrounded average scale scores.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 and 2002 Writing Assessments.

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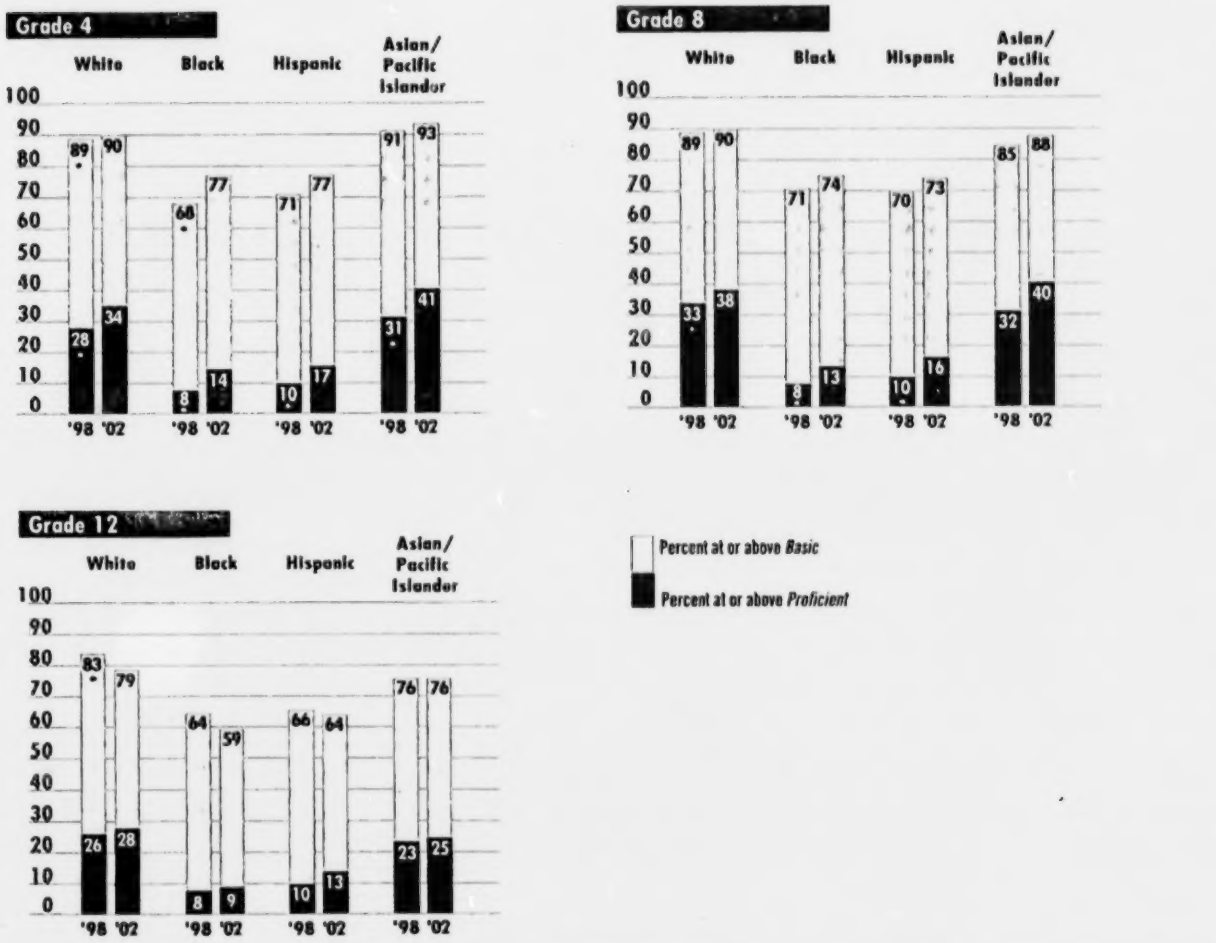
Achievement Level Results by Race/Ethnicity

Achievement-level results for the racial/ethnic subgroups are presented in the figures below. At grade 4, the percentages of White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander students at or above *Proficient* were higher in 2002 than in 1998. The percentages of White students and Black students at or above *Basic* were also higher in 2002 than in 1998.

At grade 8, the percentages of White, Black, and Hispanic students at or above the *Proficient* level were higher in 2002 than in 1998. Apparent changes in the percentages of students at or above *Basic* were not found to be statistically significant for any of the racial/ethnic subgroups.

At grade 12, the percentage of White students performing at or above *Basic* declined between 1998 and 2002. No significant differences in the percentages of students performing at or above *Proficient* were detected for any racial/ethnic subgroup for the same period.

Percentages of students at or above *Basic* and *Proficient* in writing, by race/ethnicity, grades 4, 8, and 12: 1998 and 2002



* Significantly different from 2002.

NOTE: At each grade, approximately 1 percent or less of the students were classified as American Indian/Alaska Native or Other.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1998 and 2002 Writing Assessments.

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Sample Writing Questions

A better understanding of students' performance on the NAEP 2002 writing assessment can be gained by examining sample tasks and students' responses to them. Samples of writing tasks and student responses from the NAEP 2002 writing assessment are presented on the following pages. Students were given 25 minutes in which to plan and write a response. The tables that accompany these sample tasks show the percentages of students whose responses were rated at or above a particular level: first the overall percentage and then the percentage of students at each achievement level. In addition, the writing purpose is identified for each sample task. Additional tasks and student responses as well as student performance data from previous NAEP writing assessments may be viewed on the NAEP web site at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/itmrls/.

Grade 4 Sample Questions and Responses

The *Unusual Day* prompt presented students with a sequence of full color imaginative drawings designed to provide a framework for creating a narrative. Student responses were rated according to the 6-level grade 4 narrative scoring guide in one of the following score categories:

- Excellent,
- Skillful,
- Sufficient,
- Uneven,
- Insufficient, or
- Unsatisfactory.

IMAGINE!

One morning you wake up and go down to breakfast.

This is what you see on the table.

You are surprised. Then . . .

...when you look out the window, this is what you see.

Write a story called "The Very Unusual Day" about what happens until you go to bed again.

Writing Purpose:

Narrative

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Overall percentage "Uneven" or better	Percentage "Uneven" or better			
	Below *Basic*	At *Basic*	At *Proficient*	At *Advanced*
	114 or below[1]	115–175[1]	176–224[1]	225 or above[1]
87	37	90	100	100

[1]NAEP writing scale range.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

"Uneven" responses often consisted of undeveloped lists of things the narrators of the stories saw in the stimulus pictures. This sample "Uneven" response exhibits typical difficulties with sentence boundaries, grammar, and spelling which, at times, interfere with the attempt to tell the story.

Sample "Uneven" Response

The very Unsual day. When I got down stairs to the Kitchen. I saw clouds on my plate and a raindow in my cup. When I looked out the window. I saw stars on the street and people steping on the stars. I saw two man caring stars. I saw star on the street lights. I saw pretty flowers. There were stars every where out side. So I went back to bed. I wonder about what happening tommrow.

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Overall percentage "Skillful" or better	Percentage "Skillful" or better			
	Below *Basic*	At *Basic*	At *Proficient*	At *Advanced*
	114 or below[1]	115–175[1]	176–224[1]	225 or above[1]
18	#	6	46	93

Percentage rounds to zero.
[1]NAEP writing scale range.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

In "Skillful" responses, students used details to develop their stories in parts of the response. They provided a clear structure to their stories, though with an occasional lack of transitions, as shown in this sample response.

Sample "Skillful" Response

The Very Unusual Day

One morning I woke up to get my breakfast, I couldn't believe it! on the table was salt and pepper, a glass of milk, a mug of hot cocoa... with half a rainbow coming out of it. also a fork and knife and a plate with six clouds on it!! After that I went back upstairs to get dressed. When I looked at the window all over the streets were stars all over the street. Stars where on lighting pole used as a light bulb. I said to myself What a very unusual day. That morning I went to my friends house but she was not home. So I walked back to my house. Right when I got in the phone rang. It was my friend, we talked all day until 8:00. I told her I had to go to sleep. Then it happened in front of my face outside it started to rain small one inch stars. I went upstairs to get into my pajamas. After I went to sleep. The next morning when I went to eat breakfast on the table was orange juice, knife and fork, bacon and an omlet. Plus salt and pepper. When I went to look out the window everything was back to normal. Yesterday was a very Unusual Day.

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School Schedule required students to read a short newspaper article about the sleeping habits of adults and children, and how those habits ought to influence school schedules. Students were to react to the article and use its content to frame their arguments. Students offered a range of positions, some arguing both for and against changing the school schedule, and discussed potential effects of a schedule change on in-school performance, participation in after-school activities, and family life. Responses to this task were rated according to the six-level grade 8 persuasive scoring guide in one of the following score categories:

- Excellent,
- Skillful,
- Sufficient,
- Uneven,
- Insufficient, or
- Unsatisfactory.

Imagine that the article shown below appeared in your local newspaper. Read the article carefully, then write a letter to your principal arguing for or against the proposition that classes at your school should begin and end much later in the day. Be sure to give detailed reasons to support your argument and make it convincing.

Studies Show Students Need To Sleep Late

Night Owls Versus Early Birds

The *Journal of Medicine* announced today the results of several recent studies on the sleep patterns of teenagers and adults. These studies show that adults and teenagers often have different kinds of sleep patterns because they are at different stages in the human growth cycle.

The study on teenagers' sleep patterns showed that changes in teenagers' growth hormones are related to sleeping patterns. In general, teenagers' energy levels are at their lowest in the morning, between 9 a.m. and 12 noon. To make the most of students' attention span and ability to learn, the study showed that most teenagers need to stay up late at night and to sleep late in the morning. They called this pattern "the night owl syndrome."

Studies of adults (over 30 years of age) showed the opposite sleep pattern. On average, adults' energy levels were at their lowest at night between 9 p.m. and 12 midnight and at their highest between 6 and 9 a.m. In addition, a study of adults of different ages revealed that as adults get older they seem to wake up earlier in the morning. Thus, adults need to go to sleep earlier in the evening. Researchers called this sleep pattern "the early bird syndrome."

Researchers claim that these studies should be reviewed by all school systems and appropriate changes should be made to the daily school schedule.

Writing Purpose:

Persuasive

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Overall percentage "Uneven" or better	Percentage "Uneven" or better			
	Below *Basic*	At *Basic*	At *Proficient*	At *Advanced*
	113 or below[1]	114–172[1]	173–223[1]	224 or above[1]
85	34	90	100	100

[1]NAEP writing scale range.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

"Uneven" responses took a clear position about changing the school schedule, but offered unclear or undeveloped support. Further, they often had difficulties with sentence boundary control. The "Uneven" response shown here does make a few clear points in support of a position, but none of those points is sufficiently developed.

Sample "Uneven" Response

I am against changing the school schedule. It would take away time that students have to spend with their family and friends.

Students would be sleeping in the morning, doing homework after school. This leaves no time for themselves.

This would also interfer with other activities like after school sports programs. It would also disrupt parents schedule and keep them up later than needed.

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	Percentage "Skillful" or better			
Overall percentage "Skillful" or better	Below *Basic* 113 or below[1]	At *Basic* 114–172[1]	At *Proficient* 173–223[1]	At *Advanced* 224 or above[1]
18	#	5	43	93

Percentage rounds to zero.
[1]NAEP writing scale range.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

"Skillful" responses offered clear positions supported with reasons and examples in parts of the response. This sample response does develop the arguments and is reasonably organized; however, transitions between ideas and arguments are not always present, and sentence structure and word choice are relatively unvaried. As with many upper-level responses, rhetorical questions are addressed to the audience (e.g., "What happens when we get older?").

Sample "Skillful" Response

Dear Principal,

I think you Should Keep the daily schedule as it is. As much as I would like to stay up late and sleep in, I don't think you Should change the schedule First of all, if you did change the schedule, the students would get home late and have to do their chores and go to bed. Thus, leaving no time for homework or recreation. Most of the kids I know play sports and if they got home late then there would be no time for practices, games, etc. Also, everyone in a family isn't a teenager, so they would be on a completely different schedule. So you would never be able to spend quality time with the people in your family. What happens when we get older? We cant keep these bad habits forever If we do it long enough we Might not be able to get out of it. Someday we will have to get up early and go to work. students have already adapted to the early schedule of having to get up and go to School. Why Change it?

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Grade 12 Sample Questions and Responses

For *Save a Book*, students were asked to explain what book they would save by memorization if they lived in a society where reading was not allowed. Since any book could be chosen, a wide range of responses were acceptable. Twelfth-grade writers responded well to this task, writing about books ranging from classics such as Homer's *Iliad* to popular favorites and even the occasional history textbook. Upper-level responses sometimes used the passage as a springboard to make observations about social issues. Responses to this prompt were rated according to the six-level grade 12 persuasive scoring guide in one of the following score categories:

- Excellent,
- Skillful,
- Sufficient,
- Uneven,
- Insufficient, or
- Unsatisfactory.

A novel written in the 1950's describes a world where people are not allowed to read books. A small group of people who want to save books memorize them, so that the books won't be forgotten. For example, an old man who has memorized the novel *The Call of the Wild* helps a young boy memorize it by reciting the story to him. In this way, the book is saved for the future.

If you were told that you could save just one book for future generations, which book would you choose?

Write an essay in which you discuss which book you would choose to save for future generations and what it is about the book that makes it important to save. Be sure to discuss in detail why the book is important to you and why it would be important to future generations.

Writing Purpose:

Informative

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	Percentage "Uneven" or better			
Overall percentage "Uneven" or better	Below *Basic* 121 or below[1]	At *Basic* 122–177[1]	At *Proficient* 178–229[1]	At *Advanced* 230 or above[1]
82	48	91	99	•••

••• Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.
[1]NAEP writing scale range.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

"Uneven" responses often presented quite limited information about books chosen for discussion. This response presents a very brief description and a series of unsupported abstractions about *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Some statements seem unrelated, making the response disjointed.

Sample "Uneven" Response

The book that I would save for future generations is "To Kill a Mockingbird". I think that is one of my all time favorite books that I have read. It focuses on the prejudice that was & still exists to some degree in this country. I think children in the future should know about the past & the trials & tribulations people have gone through to get our society to how it is now. This is the perfect example of a struggle & what it took to deal with it. Although the story may not end the way you want it to, the book still portrays a step taken to make us that much better of a country. Little things sometime make a world of difference.

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	Percentage "Skillful" or better			
Overall percentage "Skillful" or better	Below *Basic* 121 or below[1]	At *Basic* 122–177[1]	At *Proficient* 178–229[1]	At *Advanced* 230 or above[1]
17	#	11	46	...

Percentage rounds to zero.
*** Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.
[1]NAEP writing scale range.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

"Skillful" responses often included extensive information and organized the information quite well, with occasional lapses. The sample response shown here about *The Joy Luck Club* develops a focused discussion using many pertinent details about the book. The few errors do not interfere with understanding; however, occasionally awkward sentence structure and a bit of repetition about the importance of experience weaken the response.

Sample "Skillful" Response

If I had to choose just one book to memorize and pass on to all the generations to follow, I would pick The Joy Luck Club by Amy Tan.

Although it is the story of the relationships between a group of Chinese immigrants and their daughters, I believe it is a book that anyone any could relate to and should hear about. This is especially true in the U.S., where we are all immigrants or relatives of immigrants.

The relationships that evolve throughout the novel tell a very powerful story about differences. There are the adults, who came to California from a scary, sometimes cruel, world in China, where freedom was unheard of; then there are the first generation of children who don't understand their parents' plights and are torn between who their parents want them to be and who they are becoming.

This novel leaves a lot to be learned and understood about relationships, especially mother-daughter relationships and generational relationships. These relationships affected everyone, as is true for real-life relationships. Part of the reason for the realness of this story is probably that Ms. Tan spoke from a lot of her own experience, and the experiences of others is very important for all the generations to come to learn about and hear about, so that, even if they can't root it in their own experience, they can still possibly learn something about themselves that they didn't know were there and most certainly can learn something about this country and what makes it such a unique and special place to live.

The Joy Luck Club is about learning how to live in a new place, in a new culture and the difficulties of trying to relate to kids who know nothing, or very little, of that old place + culture that means so much. It's a great story that anyone should be able to appreciate and enjoy. The difficulties all the characters had to face were remarkable, and quite interesting to watch bloom.

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Overall percentage "Excellent"	Percentage "Excellent"			
	Below *Basic* 121 or below[1]	At *Basic* 122–177[1]	At *Proficient* 178–229[1]	At *Advanced* 230 or above[1]
4	#	1	12	‡‡‡

Percentage rounds to zero.
‡‡‡ Sample size is insufficient to permit a reliable estimate.
[1]NAEP writing scale range.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2002 Writing Assessment.

"Excellent" responses were well developed throughout with sentence variety and good word choice. The "Excellent" response shown here, about Herman Hesse's *Demian*, is well developed and has strong transitions. Well-chosen details and precise word choices support a sustained controlling idea: that teens can learn from the main character's coming of age.

Sample "Excellent" Response

Creating a literary masterpiece is most likely every writer's dream. German writer Herman Hesse did so when he wrote Demian, the story of one boy's coming of age.

Although this novel is not necessarily a blatant American classic, it does have many powerful traits and deserves to be read by any highschooler. In the sense of literary analysis, the novel is an excellent example of Jungian psychology, and serves to chronicle a boy named Emil Sinclair's individuation, or the process of finding out who he is. High school is a wonderful time of self-discovery, where teens bond with several groups of friends, try different foods, fashions, classes, and experiences, both good and bad. The end result in May of senior year, is a mature and confident adult, ready to enter the next stage of life. Since Sinclair is going through much of what an average student might (troubles at school, falling in love) relating with

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and learning from Sinclair is an important aspect of the novel. The novel speaks of two realms: the dark half and the good half, and Sinclair's early "loss of innocence" by stealing a few coins from his mother. Many students feel disheartened by the sudden realization that they are no longer children, and long for the ignorance and bliss of innocent childhood. Reading about Sinclair's journey through the good and bad realms prepares students for the imminent good and bad experiences in life, and provides them with a hope for the future: that such experiences will leave them a mature and well-rounded adult, full of wisdom and compassion.

If one were to rid the world of books, Demian should be saved because of its profound impact on its readers. It is said that a book is a classic if people continue to read it decades after it is written. I see a classic as nothing more than a literary jewel, polished until society can gaze into it and see a perfect glimpse of itself.

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The Nation's Report Card

Writing Highlights 2002

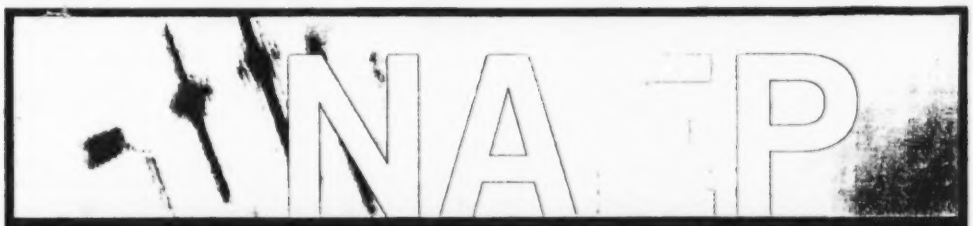
National Center for Education Statistics

More Information

Additional results and detailed information about the NAEP 2002 writing assessment can be found on the NAEP web site. Additional NAEP publications can be ordered from

U.S. Department of Education
ED Pubs
P.O. Box 1398
Jessup, MD 20794–1398
877–4ED–PUBS
(877–433–7827)

Additional information about the NAEP writing framework can be found on the National Assessment Governing Board web site at http://www.nagb.org/pubs/pubs.html.



on the Web

http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard

The NAEP web site offers a wealth of assessment information, publications, and analysis tools, including

- fast "one-stop" access to free NAEP publications and assessment data
- national and state "report cards" on student achievement in core subject areas such as reading, mathematics, and science
- sample questions, student answers, and scoring guides
- interactive data analysis tool and student performance results from past NAEP assessments

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